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AP-NORC poll: A third of U.S. adults skeptical of COVID shots

By M. STOBBE and H. FINGERHUT
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — About 1 in 3 Americans say they definitely or probably won't get the COVID-19 vaccine, according to a new poll that some experts say is discouraging news if the U.S. hopes to achieve herd immunity and vanquish the outbreak. The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that while 67% of Americans plan to get vaccinated or have already done so, 15% are certain they won't and 17% say probably not. Many expressed doubts about the vaccine's safety and effectiveness.

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In this Dec. 29, 2020, file photo, Penny Cracas, with the Chester County, Pa., Health Department, fills a syringe with the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine before administering it to emergency medical workers and healthcare personnel at the Chester County Government Services Center in West Chester, Pa.

Associated Press

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A third of U.S. adults skeptical of COVID shots



In this Jan. 24, 2021, file photo, people stand near a sign as they wait in line to receive the first of two doses of the Pfizer vaccine for COVID-19, at a one-day vaccination clinic set up in an Amazon.com facility in Seattle and operated by Virginia Mason Franciscan Health.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

The poll suggests that substantial skepticism persists more than a month and a half into a U.S. vaccina-

tion drive that has encountered few if any serious side effects. Resistance was found to run higher among younger people, people without college degrees,

Black Americans and Republicans. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's leading infectious-disease scientist, has estimated that somewhere between 70% and 85% of the U.S. population needs to get inoculated to stop the scourge that has killed close to 470,000 Americans. More recently, he said the spread of more contagious variants of the virus increases the need for more people to get their shots — and quickly.

So is 67% of Americans enough?

"No. No, no, no, no," said William Hanage, a Harvard University expert on disease dynamics. He added: "You're going to need to get quite large proportions of the population vaccinated before you see a real effect." Nearly 33 mil-

lion Americans, or about 10% of the population, have received at least one dose, and 9.8 million have been fully vaccinated, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

The poll of 1,055 adults, taken Jan. 28 through Feb. 1, provides insight into the skepticism.

Of those who said they definitely will not get the vaccine, 65% cited worries about side effects, despite the shots' safety record over the past months. About the same percentage said they don't trust COVID-19 vaccines. And 38% said they don't believe they need a vaccine, with a similar share saying that they don't know if a COVID-19 vaccine will work and that they don't trust the government.

Of those who probably will not get the vaccine but have not ruled it out completely, 63% said they are waiting to see if it is safe, and 60% said they are concerned about possible side effects.

"I don't trust pharmaceuticals. I really don't. And it doesn't sound like it's going to be safe," said Debra Nanez, a 67-year-old retired nurse from Tucson, Arizona.

Nanez said she has gotten flu and pneumonia shots but is concerned about rumors about what's in the coronavirus vaccine, and her friends have the same hesitation.

"It would take a while for me to do research on it to make sure it's safe. I just don't want to take anything that's going to harm me," she said.

Baron Walker, a 42-year-old laid-off insulation installer from Parkersburg, West Virginia, said he is in the "probably not" column, at

least for now.

He said that if he were elderly, or lived in a densely populated area, he might consider the vaccine more strongly. But he is in rural part of the country, he has been wearing a mask and social-distancing, and he feels there is a good chance the nation will achieve herd immunity, he said.

"I feel like I have plenty of time before I get a chance to get (the vaccine) anyway, to find out if there are bad side effects and whether it's even worth getting it," Walker said.

In interviews, some Americans expressed concerns about the revolutionary speed with which the vaccines were developed — less than a year.

"I feel like they rushed it," Walker said. "I'd like to see more safety data," said Helderman, a video editor and associate producer for a Christian TV program. He also said that he would like to see more clarity on whether the vaccine is effective against new variants.

Health officials are trying to counter concerns about the vaccine with science. The latest evidence indicates that the two vaccines being used in the U.S. — Pfizer's and Moderna's — are effective even against the variants, Fauci said.

Also, while the development of the vaccines was unusually fast, it was the culmination of many years of research. And the vaccines went through clinical trials involving thousands of people who were monitored for 60 days after their last dose. Studies of other vaccines have found that harmful side effects almost always materialize within 45 days. □



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Biden orders sanctions against Myanmar after military coup

By AAMER MADHANI and JONATHAN LEMIRE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Wednesday ordered new sanctions against the military regime in Myanmar, taking action after the military this month staged a coup in the Southeast Asian country and arrested de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other senior politicians.

Biden said he was issuing an executive order that will prevent Myanmar's generals from accessing \$1 billion in assets in the United States. Biden added that more measures are to come. "The military must relinquish power it seized and demonstrate respect for the will of the people of Burma," Biden said.

Biden said the new sanctions will allow his administration to freeze U.S. assets that benefit Myanmar's military leaders while maintaining support for health care programs, civil society groups and other areas that benefit the country's people. He said the administration planned to identify specific targets of the sanctions later this week.

"The people of Burma are making their voices heard, and the world is watching," Biden said, using an alternate name for Myanmar. "We'll be ready to impose



President Joe Biden speaks about his administration's response to the coup in Myanmar in the South Court Auditorium on the White House complex, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

additional measures and we'll continue to work with our international partners to urge other nations to join us in these efforts."

Before Biden spoke from the White House, large crowds demonstrating against the military takeover again took to the streets in Myanmar, even after security forces ratcheted up the use of force against them and raided the headquarters of Suu Kyi's political party.

It remains to be seen what, if any, impact the U.S. action will have on Myan-

mar's military regime. Many of the military leaders are already under sanctions because of attacks against the Muslim Rohingya minority.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a supporter of Suu Kyi, said he appreciated Biden's "ongoing engagement with Congress on prompt and practical steps to restore democracy in Burma. I hope all nations that respect democracy and the rule of law will join the U.S. in imposing meaningful costs and account-

ability on the junta." White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters shortly before Biden's announcement that "there's certainly a recognition that this will need to be a coordinated effort" with the international community to press change in Myanmar.

The U. N. Human Rights Council was set to hold a special session on Myanmar on Thursday.

The protesters in Myanmar are demanding that power be restored to Suu Kyi's deposed civilian government. They're also seeking free-

dom for her and other governing party members detained by the military after it blocked the new session of Parliament on Feb. 1.

Witnesses estimated that tens of thousands of protesters, if not more, turned out Wednesday in Yangon and Mandalay, the country's biggest cities. Rallies also took place in the capital, Naypyitaw, and elsewhere. The military cited the government's failure to act on unsubstantiated allegations of widespread voter fraud as part of the reason for the takeover and declaration of a one-year state of emergency. The generals maintain the actions are legally justified, and have cited an article in the constitution that allows the military to take over in times of emergency.

Suu Kyi's party has said it's effectively a coup. The Biden administration also was quick to officially determine the takeover was a coup, setting the stage for Wednesday's announcement.

The U.S. first imposed sanctions in 1998 after the military there violently suppressed a protest. These were tightened over the following decades because of what Washington deemed human rights violations by the ruling military regime. □

Audit raises concerns about wildfire risks at US nuclear lab

By S. MONTOYA BRYAN

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) —

One of the nation's premier nuclear laboratories isn't taking the necessary precautions to guard against wildfires, according to an audit by the U.S. Energy Department's inspector general.

The report comes as wildfire risks intensify across the drought-stricken U.S. West. Climatologists and environmentalists have been warning about worsening conditions across the region, particularly in New Mexico, which is home to Los Alamos National Laboratory and where summer rains failed to materialize

last year and winter precipitation has been spotty at best.

The birthplace of the atomic bomb, Los Alamos has experienced hundreds of millions of dollars in losses and damage from major wildfires over the last two decades. That includes a blaze in 2000 that forced the lab to close for about two weeks, ruined scientific projects, destroyed a portion of the town and threatened tens of thousands of barrels of radioactive waste stored on lab property.

Watchdog groups say the federal government needs to take note of the latest findings and conduct a

comprehensive review before the lab ramps up production of key plutonium parts used in the nation's nuclear arsenal.

"The threat and risks of wildfire to the lab and northern New Mexico will continue to increase because of climate warming, drought and expanded nuclear weapons production," said Jay Coghlan, director of the group Nuclear Watch New Mexico.

The audit released this month found that cutting back vegetation along power lines and other measures to reduce the risk of catastrophic fires were not always done, increasing the potential for another



This undated file aerial view shows the Los Alamos National Laboratory in Los Alamos, N.M.

Associated Press

devastating fire like the Cerro Grande Fire in 2000. Federal auditors said not all fire roads were maintained

to ensure safe passage for firefighters and equipment responding to blazes on lab property. □

CDC study finds two masks are better than one vs. COVID-19

By **MIKE STOBBE**
AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. government researchers found that two masks are better than one in slowing coronavirus spread, but health officials stopped short of recommending that everyone double up.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday reported the results of a lab experiment that spaced two artificial heads 6 feet from each other and checked to see how many coronavirus-sized particles spewed by one were inhaled by the other.

The researchers found that wearing one mask — surgical or cloth — blocked around 40% of the particles coming toward the head that was breathing in. When a cloth mask was worn on top of a surgical mask, about 80% were blocked.

When both the exhaling and inhaling heads were double-masked, more than 95% of the particles were blocked, said the CDC's Dr. John Brooks.

Still, for now, health authorities acknowledge they have their hands full just trying to get more people to wear one mask and wear it correctly.

"The first challenge is to get as many as people as pos-



In this Thursday, Feb. 4, 2021 file photo, a state legislator adjusts her face masks while asking a question at the Capitol in Jackson, Miss.

sible masking. And then for those that do mask, to help them get the best benefit out of that mask," Brooks said.

Brooks said agency officials heard about people donning two masks and wanted to evaluate whether it was beneficial.

The study had many limitations: The researchers used one brand of surgical mask and one kind of cloth mask, and it's not clear if results would be the same with every product. But it echoes some earlier research that suggests two masks are

better than one.

"It works," Brooks said.

The CDC updated its guidance, saying people can wear a cloth mask on top of a disposable surgical mask "for better fit and extra protection." If done correctly, the combination can tighten the gaps around the mask's edges that can let virus particles in, the CDC said.

The agency also said it will take down a make-your-own mask page, which went up last year when masks were in short supply and the CDC was encour-

aging people to take steps to interrupt viral transmission.

Some Americans have already started doubling up. Experts believe that's at least partly out of concern about new strains of coronavirus that have been found to spread more easily than the one that has driven the U.S. epidemic for the past year.

CDC guidance has evolved over the course of the epidemic.

Mask-wearing has long been common in some countries during respirato-

ry outbreaks, especially in parts of Asia, but not in the United States.

When the COVID-19 crisis began and masks disappeared from store shelves, U.S. health officials actively discouraged the general public from wearing them. "Seriously people - STOP BUYING MASKS!" then-Surgeon General Jerome Adams wrote in a tweet almost a year ago.

Two months later, after it became clear that infected people who did not exhibit symptoms could spread the virus, the CDC began recommending people wear masks in public.

Mask-wearing increased and some places enforced mask mandates, but many Americans continue not to wear them. A recent University of California survey suggested that only about half of U.S. adults wear masks when in close contact with people outside their household.

Discussions about double-masking and higher-quality masks are important, said Dr. Isaac Bogoch, an infectious diseases scientist at the University of Toronto.

"But if a significant proportion of your populations isn't wearing a mask in the first place, then you're having the wrong conversation," he added. □

Associated Press

Governor: Transgender athletes will 'destroy women's sports'



Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee delivers his State of the State Address in War Memorial Auditorium, Monday, Feb. 8, 2021, in Nashville, Tenn.

By **JONATHAN MATTISE and KIMBERLEE KRUESI**

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) —

Republican Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee said Wednesday that transgender girls should be banned from

playing on middle and high school sports teams or they will "destroy women's sports." "I do believe that transgenders participating in women's sports will destroy women's sports," Lee, who is up for reelection next year, told reporters. "It will ruin the opportunity for girls to earn scholarships. It will put a glass ceiling back over women that hasn't been there in some time. I think it's bad for women and for women's sports."

Lee's comments come as Tennessee Republicans began advancing a proposal this week requiring student athletes to prove that the student's sex matches the student's "original" birth

certificate in order to participate in public school sports. If a birth certificate is unavailable, then the parents must provide another form of evidence "indicating the student's sex at the time of birth."

Lee stopped short of promising to sign the legislation should it come to his desk, but instead reiterated that he believe transgender athletes would put "a glass ceiling back over women that hasn't been there in some time."

Tennessee is one of a dozen states with lawmakers backing restrictions on athletics or gender-confirming health care for trans minors this year. The proposals

come as a growing number of state high school athletic associations in the U.S. have enabled transgender athletes to play on teams based on their gender identity, and the NCAA has trans-inclusive guidelines for all its member schools. It's unclear how many transgender students are participating in public school sports in Tennessee.

"What a hurtful thing for a leader to say. There have been zero incidents of this being an issue," tweeted Democratic Sen. Heidi Campbell. "This is just hate legislation, and to double down with an insult to our LGBTQ community is unnecessary." □

Associated Press

'Finally': France seeks to set age for sexual consent, at 15

By ANGELA CHARLTON

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France's government wants to set the age of sexual consent at 15 and make it easier to punish long-ago child sexual abuse, amid growing public pressure and a wave of online testimonies about rape and other sexual violence by parents and authority figures.

"Finally!" was the refrain Wednesday from victims and child protection activists who have long pushed for tougher laws and greater societal recognition of the problem.

France's lack of an age of consent — along with statutes of limitations — have complicated efforts to prosecute alleged perpetrators, including a prominent modeling agent, a predatory priest, a surgeon and a group of firefighters accused of systematic sexual abuse.

Calling such treatment of children "intolerable," the Justice Ministry said "the government is determined to act quickly to implement the changes that our society expects."

"An act of sexual penetration by an adult on a minor under 15 will be considered a rape," Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti said Tuesday on France-2 television. Perpetrators could no longer cite consent to di-



In this May 28, 2013 file photo, head of the prestigious Sciences Po university Frederic Mion stands in front of the main entrance in Paris.

minish the charges, he said, though exceptions would be made for teenagers having consensual sex.

The change still needs to be enshrined in law, but the announcement is a major step. "It's very good that there is this revived debate, that there is an idea of a minimum age (of consent)," said Fatima Benomar, whose group Les Effrontees has pushed for stronger laws against sexual abusers. "This will make adults

more responsible."

An effort to set France's first age of consent three years ago in the wake of the global #MeToo movement failed amid legal complications. But it has gained new momentum since accusations emerged last month of incestuous sexual abuse involving a prominent French political expert, Olivier Duhamel. That unleashed an online #MeTooInceste movement in France that led to tens

of thousands of similar testimonies.

The Justice Ministry is in discussions with victims' groups about toughening punishment of incestuous abuse and extending or abolishing the statute of limitations on sexual violence against children, because it creates such deep trauma that it can take decades for victims to speak out. The law currently allows child victims to file complaints until they

are 48.

The ministry also says it wants "to ensure that victims of the same perpetrator do not receive different legal treatment," which could broaden the scope to prosecute those accused of abusing multiple people over decades.

Legal time limits have hampered French authorities' ability to investigate an influential cardinal, Philippe Barbarin, convicted then acquitted of covering up for a predatory priest; modeling agent Jean-Luc Brunel, an associate of disgraced late U.S. financier Jeffrey Epstein, accused of an array of sex crimes; and surgeon Joel le Scouarnec, convicted after accusations he sexually abused more than 300 children over decades, as well as other less-prominent cases. One of Brunel's alleged victims, former model Thyisia Huisman, welcomed the proposed reform, even though it's too late for her to seek justice for the rape she says she suffered as a teenager.

"It feels empowering, and that's really important," she said. "I thought nothing was ever going to change." Huisman came forward and testified to police in hopes of eliciting change and encouraging other alleged victims to speak out. □

Associated Press

Finns in snowshoes create temporary artwork on golf course

By JARI TANNER

Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — An ephemeral artwork made

with thousands of footsteps in the snow has captured attention near Finland's capital of Helsinki.



A giant complex geometric pattern formed from thousands of footsteps in the snow near to the capital Helsinki, in Espoo, Finland, Sunday Feb. 7, 2021.

Associated Press

Under the guidance of local resident and amateur artist Janne Pyykko, 11 snowshoe-clad volunteers stamped a series of complex geometric patterns on a golf course. Together, the designs create a pattern with a starfish-resembling central figure surrounded by six huge snowflakes.

The artwork, which was completed over two days, measures about 160 meters (525 feet) in diameter. Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat said it could be the largest snow-drawing ever made in the Nor-

dic country.

"It was both a social challenge and a visual challenge," Pyykko, who is inspired by visual effects and has earlier created smaller snow illustrations by himself, told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

With social challenge he referred to being able to inspire and lead the group to create the artwork that was based on strict geometrical design by computer as shown on a YouTube video posted by Pyykko.

At the site, the group used measuring and assisting

strings to help to construct and maneuver the roundish figures.

Pyykko said "there is something in the human brain that likes the round form" and added that the drawing is best observed from the air. He noted that mapping out the patterns for snowshoers to follow within a set area of the Lofkulla golf course required a great deal of ground planning.

The work was designed to be temporary, lasting only until the next snowfall or heavy winds erase the footprints. □

Wheels only, please: Iran marks 1979 revolution anniversary

By **NASSER KARIMI**

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's President Hassan Rouhani urged the West on Wednesday to restore the 2015 nuclear deal as the nation marked the anniversary of the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution — on wheels this time, rather than traditional rallies and marches amid the worst COVID-19 outbreak in the Middle East. Rouhani said the "era of sanctions" was over and that the agreement is the only way forward.

"There is no other way for the world and for the region," Rouhani said during a televised speech. "The only path is definitely the path of diplomacy. The only path is the world's agreement with Iran. God willing, we will be successful in this path." Rouhani also said "God was the one who toppled" former President Donald Trump, who pulled the U.S. out of the nuclear pact and imposed sanctions on Iran. He said Iranians who resisted Trump pressures also were effective in Trump's overthrow. Trump lost the U.S. Novem-



Iranians drive past missiles by their motorcycle during a rally marking the 42nd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, at Azadi (Freedom) Square in Tehran, Iran, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021.

Associated Press

ber election to Democrat Joe Biden, who wants to revive the deal, but insists that Iran must first reverse parts of its nuclear program. That's created a contest of wills between the nations. The 2015 atomic deal saw Iran agree to limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

On domestic issues, Rou-

hani, who has served the maximum of two consecutive terms, urged a high turnout in the June presidential election that will decide his successor. Traditionally, high turnout brings moderate presidents to office in Iran.

Meanwhile, waving Iranian flags, chanting "Death to America," "Death to Israel" and burning U.S. and Israeli

flags as has become a ritual in Iranian protests, Iranians in cars and on bikes commemorated the 42nd anniversary of the revolution that ousted the West-backed monarchy and brought Islamists to power. For Rouhani, it's the last such anniversary speech. Iranians are expected to elect his successor in presidential elections in June.

Rouhani has served the maximum two mandates for president under Iran's constitution.

State TV said hundreds of thousands drove cars and motorbikes through cities and towns, as well as motorboats in ports and around islands, after the government decided to replace traditional rallies and demonstrations with motorcades. In the capital, Tehran, processions of cars and other vehicles started out from 12 different points on Wednesday morning, driving through the streets to circle Tehran's iconic Azadi Square, the traditional place of gatherings for anniversaries.

The country's military also put three ballistic missiles on display near Azadi square as army paratroopers jumped in nearby and schools' chorus performed on many junctions.

The celebrations come at a tense time, amid hopes that Iran will find relief from the harsh economic sanctions imposed by Trump in 2018 and as the country struggles with a surge in coronavirus infections. □

'Emaciated' survivors hint at worse in Ethiopia's Tigray

By **CARA ANNA**

Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — "Many, many severe cases of malnutrition" are being reported in Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region, Red Cross officials said

Wednesday, as 80% of Tigray's 6 million people are unreachable in the fourth month of fighting and "emaciated" women and children fill displacement camps.

Reports of people already

starving to death might just be a handful, but "after a month it will be in the thousands," warned Ethiopian Red Cross president Ato Abera Tola. After two months, he said, it will be tens of thousands.

Fighting continues between Ethiopian and allied forces and those of the now-fugitive Tigray government that had dominated the country's leadership for nearly 30 years.

The conflict broke out just before the harvest in the largely agricultural region and in the midst of a locust outbreak. Much of the Tigray population has been living off whatever resources they have since early November, and many people are on the run, leaving possessions behind.

Nearly 3.8 million people in Tigray need help, Abera said.

He described seeing displaced women and children in the northern town of Shire who were "all emaciated ... their skin is really on their bones." And these are the people who were able to escape to the camps, he said.

Once humanitarian workers are able to reach Tigray's rural areas, "there we will see a more devastating crisis," Abera said. "We have to get prepared for the worst, is what I'm saying."

The Tigray regional capital, Mekele, "is, a paradox to say, a very lucky place," added Francesco Rocca, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent

Societies. It now hosts a quarter-million displaced people.

Rocca described a "very difficult visit" to Tigray in which accessible hospitals are "barely working" with no medicines, no food for patients and no psychosocial support — "something surreal" after being looted or damaged.

"I have never seen a place where a simple antibiotic is not present," he later told The Associated Press in an interview, expressing shock at "the systematic aggression to health facilities." Vaccines have expired. There are no HIV or tuberculosis drugs. "This is unacceptable," Rocca said. In the camps for displaced people, "there is a high risk of an outbreak of cholera or other diseases." □



In this Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2020 file photo, refugees who fled the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region ride a bus going to the Village 8 temporary shelter, near the Sudan-Ethiopia border, in Hamdayet, eastern Sudan.

Associated Press

Migration through Panama resumes after pandemic lockdown

By JUAN ZAMORANO

Associated Press

SAN VICENTE, Panama (AP) —

After nearly a year stalled in migrant camps at the edge of the jungle, hundreds of migrants have begun to move across Panama and into neighboring Costa Rica in recent weeks. Panama closed its borders last March to try to slow the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 2,000 migrants suddenly found their years-long journey toward the United States suspended. But on Jan. 29, Panama announced it was reopening its land borders, setting off a surge of migration through the dense jungle covering the Colombia-Panama border.

Paul Saenz, a 27-year-old electrician from Haiti, flew to Ecuador in December. He then took a bus to Colombia near the Panama border, joined other Haitian migrants and crossed the jungle into Panama in three days.

He said he wanted to make it to the U.S. to help his family back in Haiti.

The new U.S. administration with a kinder tone toward



Haitian migrants sit on the grass at a migrant camp amid the new coronavirus pandemic in San Vicente, Darien province, Panama, Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021.

immigrants gave him hope. "I hope it goes well for us," he said. "This president (Joe Biden) is better than the other who was a little harder."

Ovidia Fernández, left Havana, Cuba two years ago with her daughter Anabel. They spent time in Guyana, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. They arrived in

San Vicente on Sunday after walking through the jungle for 13 days.

"There could be a chance of entering the United States," she said. "There are people who believe that with the change (of administration) there's hope."

José Bernal, local commissioner for Panama's National Borders Service said the

flow of migrants typically picks up during this time of year, when the rains pause. He said the pandemic restrictions sharply decreased the number of migrants who passed through last year to 8,000, down from 24,000 in 2019.

"The American dream continues driving people to move despite the pan-

demic," Bernal said.

Idiam Osorio, a specialist with the U.N.'s International Organization for Migration in Panama, said the change of government in the U.S. was just one among a variety of factors spurring people to migrate. "We don't dismiss that this issue (the new U.S. administration) is also connected to the growing motivation of migrants who have started to move, but the reasons are diverse, including economic (reasons)," she said. Saenz and other recent arrivals stay at two migrant camps in Laja Blanca and San Vicente in the Darien area that borders Colombia. The first is made up of tents and portable toilets, while the second, which opened in late September, has small prefabricated buildings for the migrants. Panama's National Immigration Service said that since Jan. 29, some 551 migrants have left those camps and moved to Panama's border with Costa Rica, something they previously had not been allowed to do during the pandemic. □

Associated Press

Group of foreign climbers ends expedition at K2 in Pakistan

By MUNIR AHMED

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A group of foreign mountaineers ended their plans to try and scale the treacherous K2 mountain

in Pakistan, the world's second highest peak, because of bad weather, a mountaineering official said Wednesday.

The decision came after three climbers went miss-

ing last week and a subsequent search to find them hasn't been successful.

Karrar Haidri, Pakistan Alpine Club secretary, said the decision to cancel was made by Chhang Dawa Sherpa, who heads Seven Summit Treks expedition company, and was the leader of a group that planned to attempt a winter ascent of K2.

Haidri said the decision was Sherpa's and there was no government ban on winter expeditions.

He said some mountaineers were still on the mountain. Last week, experienced Pakistani climber Ali Sadpara, Jon Snorri of Iceland and Juan Pablo Mohr of Chile lost contact with base camp and were reported missing Saturday. □



A photo of K2, the world's second-highest mountain, is displayed on a cell phone in Islamabad, Pakistan, Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021.

Associated Press

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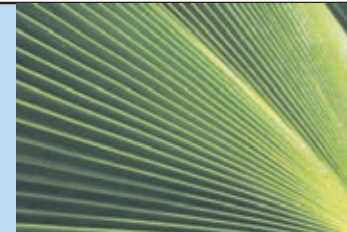
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LOCAL



EAGLE BEACH — There is no arguing whether to dine at a trendy, untraditional venue or enjoying the classic mood because at Manchebo you get it all in one. Ike's Bistro and The Chophouse at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa have an amazing Valentine's Dinner and Vegan Valentine's Dinner featuring your classic favorites and Euro-Caribbean hot seller options to shake it up.

You can't beat the classics but for sure add Euro-Caribbean twist options as we are in the Caribbean and Dutch Kingdom after all. Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa has an established name on the island for many years and beats it all with their amazing outdoor dining. Here you encounter elegance in an informal way, culinary highs and genuine smiles from the staff.

It is all about the feel this Valentine's, simply indulge in culinary highlights. The resort has everything you need for a fabulous feast. Gaze over the pool and palm trees and let Aruba's breeze take you away on a journey with the delicacies of Chef Sandro Herold. Romance will run its natural course.

More than just a dinner

Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa is known for its personal approach, they offer more than just a dinner. The resort feels very cozy and the restaurant allows relaxation, con-

Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa: Love, Eat and Beach: The unbeatable Valentine's menu



nection and romance. Chef Herold excels in vegan dishes and Ike's Bistro drawing an ever-growing vegan clientele, naturally the chef has to be great in combining flavors which reflects in his non-vegan dishes. The Valentine's menu starts with a Chef's Amuse-bouche followed by a choice between three Appetizers: Quiche Lorraine, Fried Brie & Strawberry Mesclun Salad and Beef Carpaccio. The delicious choices for the Main Course are your favorite Valentine's Steak, Saffron Seafood Paella or Creamy Trofie Chicken Caprese Pasta. There is no greater love than a smashing dessert and Red Velvet Mango Strawberry Delight is just that.

For the vegan lovers we have a Lovers' Delight: After the Chef's Amuse-bouche you make a choice between Tortellini of Love and Crispy Battered Heart of Palm.

To continue the culinary romance we offer Cucumber Stoba or Polenta Timbal. The dinner ends with the scrumptious Red Velvet Mango Strawberry Delight.

Both menus include a glass of bubbly and a rose.

The restaurant naturally lends itself to social distancing as it is open-air, set perfectly by the tropical pool. Ike's Bistro and The Chophouse have an established name on the island for its excellent food and highly-rated service level. Come over to celebrate your Valentine and create a lifetime memory. Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa is waiting on you! ☐

Reserve your Seat: Tel: +297 522 3444 | Email: ikesbistro@manchebo.com.



Valentine's Day is the celebration of love, beauty and romantic mood between couples and/or friends. It is a festive day where you would like to emphasize the importance

of this special person in your life. You can do this in many ways, by sending cards, flowers, gifts, presents or arranging a wonderful day/night out.

Celebrate Love!

While enjoying your stay in Aruba you can make this day extra special by surprising your love with the help of Aruba Today. Despite the fact that we have wonderful dinner and gift options to choose from, advertised in our newspaper in the coming days up to February 14th, we can make this day even more special.

Surprise your loved one with a picture of her/him or both of you in Aruba Today, accompanied by your personal message. Imagine taking your vaca-

tion breakfast in the morning while going through the newspaper and all of a sudden you see YOU. This will make her or his day for sure.

What Do You Do?

Send your selected picture (high resolution JPEG) with short personal Valentine message (maximum 40 words) to email: news@arubatoday.com by latest Friday February 12.

What Will We Do?

We will publish your picture and message in the local



section of Aruba Today on Saturday February 13 in our printed newspaper and on our website and Facebook page. Make her/him smile on this special day, do something different!

There is only one happiness in this life, to love and be loved. ... ~ George Sand

Paseo Herencia is always fun and exciting to visit



PALM BEACH — Paseo Herencia offers a variety of shopping, dining and entertainment options in an outdoor center located in the heart of Palm Beach.

Shopping

The Paseo Herencia stores offer a great collection in beach wear, clothing, perfume, shoes, jewelry, souvenirs and much more. Pamper yourself by visiting Maggy's and enjoy their salon services and shop for your favorite beauty products. Aruba Aloe has that perfect gift to bring back home, all made with natural ingredients. Other

brand favorites are Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Aldo, Carmen Steffens, Quiksilver, Pandora and many more.

Restaurants

Start with a breakfast meal at Chill Out Island Café for a fluffy souffle pancake with your choice of toppings, breakfast sandwiches or acai bowls plus your favorite bubble tea. TGI Fridays offers breakfast options starting from \$8.57, available all day - every day. Go Argentinian style at Che Bar and try their delicious omelet with chorizo/ham, mozzarella,

onions, peppers, and tomatoes served with skillet potatoes and toast. These restaurants are also open for lunch and dinner and will delight you with unique tastes. Choices run from Argentinian dishes to, Asian/Caribbean, International and Mexican at amongst others Iguana Cantina. Sip and have a good time at the Bulldog Aruba located in the center of the Plaza. Open till 11pm.

VIP Cinema

Visit the one-of-a-kind Caribbean Cinemas VIP on the second floor of Paseo Herencia and enjoy your favorite movies with the latest projection and 7.1 Dolby surround sound with a delicious bag of popcorn.

Entertainment

Kids can enjoy the Paseo kids' activities, carousel & kiddie train, every day from 6pm to 10pm and do not forget to catch the nightly water shows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm and 9:30pm. Another fun activity is the The Range Airsoft Experience located behind The Lazy Turtle. Snap Instagramable



pictures at the Angel Wings located between Pandora and Quiksilver and another one in front of TGI Fridays. Catch a live Show on Friday by violinist Angela Flores and Saturday by the acrobatic group Ritmo Cubano at 8pm on the Plaza Padu.

Sign up, Shop & Win

Fall in love with the Paseo Points Program this Valentine's Day Sign up between Jan 27 - Feb 12 and participate to WIN these great prizes:

- Dinner & VIP Movie for Two @ Caribbean Cinemas Aruba
- Super VIP Carwash at Splash n Dash Car Wash Aruba
- Paseo Gift Certificates

Registration is FREE and you can accumulate points with EVERY purchase at the Paseo Herencia stores, restaurants and cinema. To sign up go to <https://paseo-herencia.eber.co/> sign-in

With any purchase at Paseo Herencia you will receive FREE parking in the parking garage. Paseo Herencia has implemented all COVID protocols according to the Aruba Health & Happiness code. It is required to wear face masks when shopping or visiting the mall to ensure a safe environment.

To learn more, visit the Paseo Herencia Facebook or Instagram page. □

Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. For today we received some amazing pictures



from **Mick and Barb Breen** from Norton Shores, Michigan. They wrote:

Aruba to me is..... We call Aruba our winter residents. We want to and need to escape the SNOW! We have been coming to Aruba for 20 years. We love the people we have met. They are from back home and also our special Aruban friends. The weather is perfect, we enjoy the beautiful beaches from one end of the island to the other and sunsets. The food dining out and from the grocery stores is always tasty and of course many drinks and happy hours. Glad we could return this year to support the Aruban economy. The pandemic has been terrible for ALL no matter where you are from. □

Valentine's Day

Three-Course Meal | \$87*_{pp}

Includes one complimentary long-stemmed red rose.

Spend a romantic evening dining at the Sunset Grille at the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino where you can choose from options like traditional Oysters Rockefeller, fresh Local Grouper and the divinely decadent Chocolate Lover's Dessert.



OPEN 5:30PM - 10:00PM

For reservations, dial +297 526 6612 or email hiltonconciierge@depalmtours.com

*Price is subject to 18% service charge.

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f /AquaGrillAruba

Special Valentine's
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\$45 per person
Valid only for today Feb 14th

Items subject to change due to seasonality and availability.
All prices are in US dollars. A 15% service charge will be added to the bill

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f t i

AHATA: January's occupancy was 67% lower than a year ago



ORANJESTAD — The Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association (AHATA) has published the latest hotel performance data reporting that in January 2021 the occupancy decreased compared to December and was 67% lower than a year ago.

January 2021

- Occupancy: The occupancy rate was 25%,

down from a 35% occupancy in December. January's occupancy was 67.4% lower than the occupancy a year ago.

- ADR: The average daily rate (for occupied rooms) decreased by 20% compared to last year, to \$297.45.
- RevPAR: The revenue per available room dropped by 74% to \$96.39.

Occupancy forecast

	Occupancy	Recovery vs 2019
February	29%	34%
March	32%	38%
Q1 2021	29%	34%
2021 Avg	44%	52%

Timeshare

AHATA's Timeshare properties experienced a

57% occupancy rate in January and expects the same occupancy rate of 57% for February 2021.

AHATA member hotels: Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort, Barceló Aruba, Boardwalk Boutique Hotel, Brickell Bay Beach Club, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Courtyard by Marriott, Divi & Tamarijn All-Inclusive, Eagle Aruba Resort, Holiday Inn Resort Aruba, Hyatt Regency Aruba, Hyatt Place Aruba Airport, Manchebo Beach Resort, Marriott Aruba & Stellaris Casino, Paradera Park, Renaissance Aruba Resort, The Ritz-Carlton Aruba, RIU Palace Aruba, RIU Palace Antillas, Talk of the Town Hotel.

AHATA member timeshares: Divi Aruba Phoenix, Divi Dutch Village, Divi Village Golf, La Cabana, Marriott Ocean Club, Marriott Surf Club. □



ORANJESTAD — One thing is for certain: Chef Scott Scheuerman and his team are famous for getting people hooked, just like the fish on your plate. This Valentine's Day you will get the chef's passion and love on your plate while dining in an elegant ambiance. Scheuerman will have you taste for what reason Aqua Grill established its name since opening in 2002, and why it reaped accolades from such prestigious travel publications as Fodor's, who says, "This hip restaurant is heaven on earth for seafood lovers, who will find fresh fish galore..."

`A Scheuer thing'

American-born Scheuerman, executive chef of Aqua Grill, is thrilled about 'his restaurant'. "We started out as a New England style seafood restaurant, patterned after Boston style. But we quickly blended into some Caribbean, local flair... if you will. We do still offer the traditional New England dishes like whole Maine lobster, northern seafood plates like the salmon, tuna and swordfish. We buy also from the local fisherman to offer Caribbean dishes like snapper and grouper which are number one

Aqua Grill restaurant: Only the best is good enough for your love

sellers in our restaurant being the most prevalent local fishes. Catches like wahoo, mahi mahi and brasil are welcome too, anything that comes out of the water we embrace."

Fresh import from Boston

Aqua Grill flies in their own shipments on a weekly basis mostly from Boston because the price quality balance is the best, says the chef. "We are unique in this. Number one priority is buying fresh, we mean not frozen. Our original concept is New England seafood and we stick to that concept. They have a wonderful assortment of oysters and lobsters as well." Aqua Grill also offers international fusion type of menu items; actually all you wish for is there. A very balanced menu awaits you. "And we have options for meat lovers and vegetarians/vegans too. We, however, do not mix it up too much because we believe we do not want to lose our identity as a seafood restaurant," Scheuerman adds.

Valentine vibes

Coming Sunday Aqua Grill presents a special 3-course \$ 45 Valentine's Menu featuring Shrimp Cocktail, Calco Croquette or Caribbean Seafood Chowder as a delicious Appetizer followed by a wonderful choice of Main Course between Local Catch of the Day, Fried Fisherman Platter or Slow-Roasted Rack of Lamb. The gastronomic tour ends with a home-baked Valentine's Cake. A glass of sparkling wine is

included in this amazing offer.

Rave reviews

Secretly, we all know that the success of a restaurant begins in the kitchen. That is where the chef creates his magic and for Aqua Grill the culinary team has won an assortment of awards for their continuous delivery of 'haute-cuisine del mar.' Classic seafood is mingled with contemporary ideas resulting in surprising dishes that soon made the restaurant a must-dine, confirmed by established travel media specialists like Fodor's and Frommer's. It's clear as water; for a memorable valentine's evening in Aruba go to the island's premier seafood restaurant: Aqua Grill. This seafood-heaven place is already a statement for years with a consistency in upscale dining and top-shelf service. If you like to savor your seafood, this is your dive in. We promise you will get hooked. □

Aqua Grill
J.E. Irausquin Blvd. 374
Phone: +297-586-5900
Fax: +297-586-5901
Facebook – Instagram – website



Taxing time: How the pandemic will affect filing your taxes

By **SARAH SKIDMORE SELL**
AP Personal Finance Writer

The pandemic has made everything a bit trickier — tax filing season is no exception.

The whole process is starting a bit later this year and there are a few wrinkles to be aware of for those who received unemployment benefits, worked from home, took on gig work, were a victim of fraud — or faced other issues common to 2020.

The IRS will begin accepting tax returns on Feb. 12. Here's what you should know before you file:

UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment benefits are taxable income, which may surprise some filers.

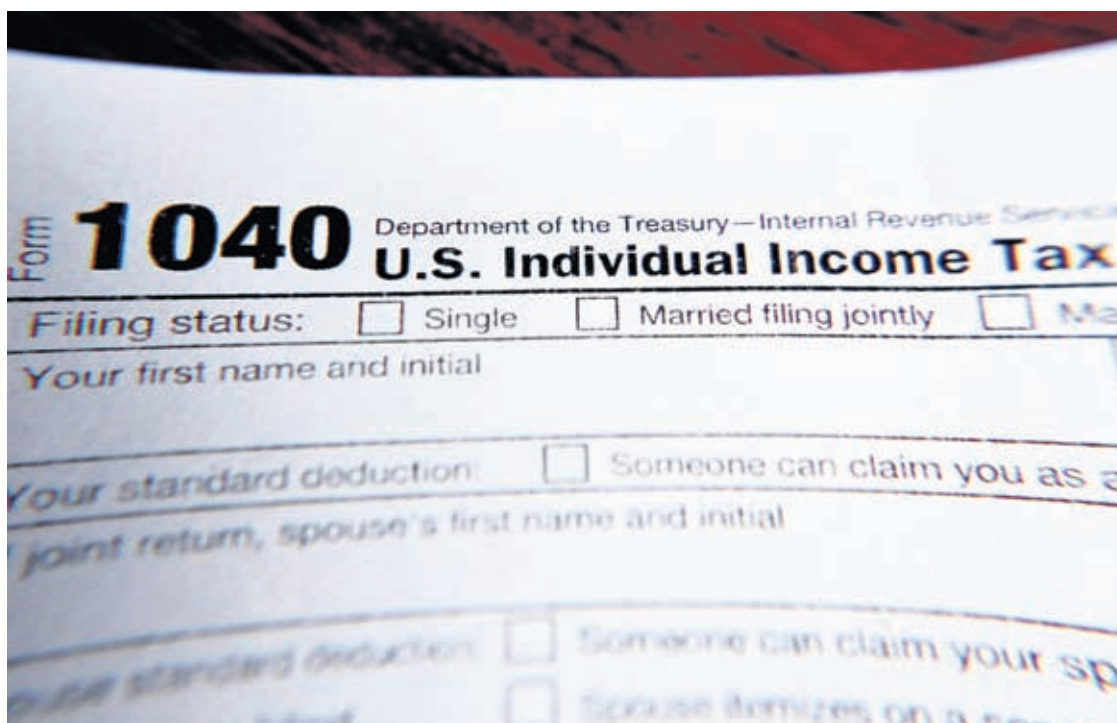
Workers are not required to have federal taxes withheld from their benefit payments. While they are given the option to have it withheld, few opt to.

Additionally, unemployment benefits are always subject to federal taxes, but a handful of states do not tax it.

RELIEF CHECKS

The two rounds of economic impact payments sent to millions of Americans are not taxable income. But people who did not get their payments, or received less than they were due, can get the proper amount by claiming the Recovery Rebate Credit on their 2020 taxes.

As a reminder, the first



This Wednesday, Feb. 13, 2019 file photo shows part of a 1040 federal tax form printed from the Internal Revenue Service website, in Zelienople, Pa.

round of payments was worth up to \$1,200 per eligible adult and \$500 per dependent; the second was worth up to \$600 for each eligible household member. Those who received a larger economic impact payment than they were due will not be penalized.

HOME OFFICE

Working from home became the norm for many in 2020, but few will be able to claim their expenses for their new home office setup. That's because the home-office deduction can only be taken by businesses or the self-employed. Employees can no longer claim any unreimbursed expenses following the last tax overhaul.

To properly claim a home office, it must be used "exclusively and regularly" as the principal place of business, said Lisa Greene-Lewis, a CPA and tax expert at TurboTax. That means the table where your kids do their homework, your family eats dinner and you do your work does not count. Side note: It won't affect your federal taxes but if you relocated to a different state during the pandemic, you may owe state taxes in more than one location.

TAX CREDITS

Congress put a temporary "lookback" provision in place for this tax season that could help many low and moderate-income households.

The provision allows taxpayers to use either their 2019 or 2020 income when claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit. The eligibility and size of these credits vary based on household size and income. In general, the less earned, the larger the credit.

However, rampant unemployment put some families at risk of missing out or getting a smaller credit as unemployment is not considered "earned income" in the eyes of the IRS. In response, lawmakers are allowing taxpayers to pick which year's income would yield the greatest benefit.

INVESTING

A number of people

jumped into the stock market for the first time in 2020. But tax experts warn these investing newbies may not be fully aware of their tax obligation. The most important thing to understand is you only pay taxes on investments when you "realize" their gains. So if you bought a stock in 2020 and its value went up — you won't pay taxes on those gains until you sell. And if it sank in value, the same rules of "realizing" apply. It hurts to have a loss but you can use those to offset your gains, up to a limit.

It's also important to understand that gains are taxed differently depending on how long you held on to the investment. If you sell a stock you held for less than a year, they are taxed at the higher short term capital gains rate, versus the lower long term capital gains rate for investments held for more than a year. And if you are a higher income household, you may also face a net investment income tax on capital gains and other investment income.

Made a killing at GameStop or another short squeeze? That won't come up until 2021 taxes, which aren't due until next year. But it would be wise start making plans or anticipated payments on those taxes now. Some types of trading activity can be complicated, so it may be wise to seek professional help in preparing your taxes. □

Budget deficit totals record \$735.7 billion through January

By **MARTIN CRUTSINGER**

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government's budget deficit hit \$735.7 billion through the first four months of the budget year — an all-time high for the period — as a pandemic-induced recession cut into tax revenues while spending on COVID relief measures sent outlays soaring.

The Treasury Department reported Wednesday that the deficit so far for the budget year that began Oct. 1 is 89% higher than

the \$389.2 billion deficit run up in the same period a year ago.

Last year's deficit through January had not yet been impacted by the pandemic, which began hitting the U.S. in February.

The report showed that spending through the first four months of this budget year was up 22.7% to \$1.92 trillion compared to the same period last year, while government tax revenues were down 0.8% to \$1.19 trillion.

For January, the deficit

totaled a record for the month of \$182.8 billion. One of the big spending categories last month included \$139 billion for another round of individual economic relief payments authorized by the \$900 billion relief measure Congress passed in late December. President Joe Biden is pushing for Congress to approve another \$1.9 trillion relief measure that would provide a round of \$1,400 payments. The December measure included individual payments of \$600. □



Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen participates in a meeting with President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and business leaders to discuss a coronavirus relief package in the Oval Office of the White House, Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021, in Washington.

Associated Press

What is Clubhouse, the buzzy new audio chat app?

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY** and **MICHAEL LIEDTKE**
AP Technology Writers

Clubhouse, an invitation-only audio chat app launched less than a year ago, has caught the attention of tech industry bigshots like Tesla CEO Elon Musk and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg — not to mention the Chinese government, which has already blocked it in the country. What is Clubhouse, you ask?

WHAT IS CLUBHOUSE?

The iPhone-only app, once you're in, lets you start or listen into conversations on a whole host of topics, from tech to pro sports, parenting, Black literature and so on. There are no posts, photos or videos — only people's profile pictures and their voices.

Conversations can be intimate, like a phone call, or might include thousands of people listening to a talk by boldface names, like a conference or stage interview. Think part podcast, part conference call, part social media. It's free to use and there are no ads, at least not at this point.

HOW DO I GET IN?

Currently, the only way to get an invitation is to score one from someone already on Clubhouse. It's still in "beta," version, like Gmail was in its early days, when it was a badge of nerd worthiness to get an account. If you don't know anyone



The icon for the social media app Clubhouse is seen on a smartphone screen in Beijing, Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2021.

Associated Press

who can invite you yet, you may not have to wait much longer. When Clubhouse first came out, new members only got two invitations. That number has now grown to five, signaling that the app feels ready to broaden its audience. You can also download the app and get on a waiting list to be let into Clubhouse. This is part of the app's current appeal — like an exclusive club, only it's expanding by the minute. The aura has been magnified by the star power of early members such as rap star Drake,

actor Jared Leto, actress Tiffany Haddish, and influential technology figures such as venture capitalist Marc Andreessen and Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey.

Once you have an invitation, you can import your Twitter profile — or start from scratch — and then follow people or "clubs" on a broad range of topics. The app encourages people to use their real names, though this does not appear to be enforced. You'll also need an iPhone — Clubhouse doesn't yet work on Android phones and is not on the web.

WHO MADE CLUBHOUSE?

It was created by Silicon Valley entrepreneur Paul Davison, based known for a location-driven social networking app Highlight that Pinterest bought in 2016, and a former Google engineer, Rohan Seth. Although it obviously wasn't planned, they probably couldn't have picked a better time to start welcoming a select few into Clubhouse. The app made its debut last March, just as people were being ordered to stay at home to battle the pandemic and found themselves eager to talk to other people besides their family or roommates.

WHY IS IT GETTING MORE

ATTENTION NOW?

The primary reason is probably that Musk and Zuckerberg recently made surprise appearances on Clubhouse. When two technology icons worth a combined \$280 billion choose to use the same app to get their message out within a few days of each other, people tend to sit up and take notice.

In his Jan. 31 appearance, Musk began by discussing his mission to get to Mars through its rocket ship company Space X and sharing his views on cryptocurrency, artificial intelligence and the ongoing pandemic. But then he rocked the Clubhouse by summoning Robinhood CEO Vlad Tenev to the virtual stage for an interview about the app's role in transforming GameStop's stock from a dud into a Wall Street sensation that at least briefly devastated sophisticated investors who had bet the shares would continue to decline.

That interview illustrated two points that are important to remember about Clubhouse. Although the app itself says it doesn't record the discussions occurring within its rooms, that doesn't mean other participants aren't. And the post-

ed recordings of discussions like that also prove there are ways for getting around Clubhouse's 5,000-person limit in its rooms.

Zuckerberg's Feb. 4 appearance on Clubhouse didn't delve into anything quite as hot as the GameStop frenzy, but his presence still added to the curiosity about the app.

SO IS IT ALL TECH INDUSTRY PEOPLE?

While the early users of Clubhouse were largely venture capitalists and startup folks, as the app's user base has expanded so has the diversity of its members. Users can now explore subjects such as "Ask A Coach: Life, Love & The Pursuit of Joy, Money/Health," "Bitcoin Basics for Baby Boomers," "Drag Race Clubhaus," "Investing While Black" and "Plant-Based Basics for Beginners with Dietitian Jasmine."

WHAT HAPPENED IN CHINA?

Thousands of Chinese users have flocked to the app in recent months, lured by the unfettered discussions it allowed with people abroad — particularly about democracy, Taiwan and other sensitive topics. That was especially striking given that President Xi Jinping's government is increasingly hostile to independent voices.

Clubhouse allowed many mainland users their first direct communication with people in Hong Kong and Taiwan and with exiles from the Uighur minority in the northwestern region of Xinjiang. The app was removed from Apple Inc.'s China store by at least Dec. 16, according to Benjamin Ismail, an activist with the group Apple Censorship which tracks censorship in the Apple Store. Users still could download it if they had access to an Apple app store abroad.

But on Monday, Chinese users lost access to Clubhouse, much the way thousands of other websites and social media apps have been blocked by the Chinese Communist Party using the world's most extensive system of internet filters. □

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

		8				2		
			7		2			
9		2				5		8
	2		1		6		4	
	3		4		8		1	
6		1				7		2
			3		1			
		5				4		

Difficulty Level ★★★

2/11

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From rom-coms to murder: Hugh Grant is enjoying the darkness

By **JOCELYN NOVECK**
AP National Writer

When Hugh Grant accepted his Golden Globe in 1995 for "Four Weddings and a Funeral," you could say he slayed the room — with the kind of boyishly befuddled, sweetly stammering speech he might have made to Andie MacDowell in that film or to Julia Roberts in "Notting Hill." Fast forward a few decades and Grant, now 60, is doing a different kind of slaying. He's up for another Globe for HBO's "The Undoing," in which he actually kills — like, with a mallet — as an affluent Manhattan pediatric oncologist who sidelines as a psychopath. It's not his first cinematic exploration of evil: In "A Very English Scandal," for which he also earned a Globe nod, Grant got some career-best reviews as Jeremy Thorpe, the real-life British political leader who was tried on charges of conspiring to murder his former lover. And on a lighter (but still not very nice) note, he played a very theatrical villain in "Paddington 2." The metamorphosis has been unmistakable: As he's grown older, Grant has grown darker, at least in terms of his roles. As he tells it, he's "old and ugly" anyway — rom-com leads aren't an option. But what



This image released by HBO shows Hugh Grant, from left, Noma Dumezweni and Nicole Kidman in a scene from "The Undoing."

Associated Press

unites those three recent roles, he says, is not so much evil as narcissism. "It's almost," he quips, "like the film and television world has worked out who I really am." Grant spoke to The Associated Press last week upon news of his sixth Globe nomination, this time for best actor in a limited series or TV movie. He spoke from his London home where he's busy perfecting the art of making paper snowflakes, via his kids and their remote learning. Remarks have been edited for length and clarity.

AP: How are you feeling about this latest nomination?

GRANT: Oh, it's really nice. I was never really one of the people who gets nominations and things. I spent many years making romantic comedies that people quite liked but never got nominated. So it's really lovely. It's put a spring in my step, which is a rare thing for me — I'm a gloomy bastard.

AP: It's been said you are now specializing in characters that are charming like your old ones, but have a seriously dark underbelly.

GRANT: I don't really think of it that way. I just think, "What's the most interesting stuff that's coming across the desk?" Because I'm old and ugly, I don't get

offered the charming romantic leading men, and I'm rather glad I don't. But I do get offered some very interesting stuff.

AP: You seem to relish playing dark.

GRANT: You know, actors love playing dark. Audiences love dark. People love dark. I've got a book on my desk called "Why We Love Serial Killers," and it's very fascinating. So yes, it's a huge relief in fact to be expressing evil, whether it's in a very comedic way like in "Paddington 2" or a very disguised way like in "The Undoing," or in a very smarmy way like in "A Very English Scandal." What's weird is that that the com-

mon denominator of them all is not so much evil, it's narcissism.

AP: Do you ever worry that playing such unsavory characters will make you unlikeable?

GRANT: No. I really don't have that worry! The trick anyway is that if you're playing someone evil, they have got to be FUN evil. They don't have to be good, but they have to be enjoyable. Which really is part of the trick of acting. It's important to be real but I think it's also very important to be in some way entertaining. In the end, that's what we're making, entertainment. And that sometimes gets forgotten.

AP: Does being recognized this year feel different, given what's going on in the world?

GRANT: Well, I certainly wouldn't complain about my lot. I'm very lucky. But anyone who has been doing home-schooling for the better part of a year deserves some little boost in morale. If you want me to make you a paper snowflake, I can make you a really beautiful one now. In fact I quite like making them. I have also been trying to work out what the equatorial zones of the world are with my 8-year-old. Meanwhile, they're screaming at me. □

'Wizard of Oz' remake planned with 'Watchmen' director



Costumed "Wizard of Oz" characters attend the "Wizard of Oz" 70th Anniversary Emerald Gala on Sept. 24, 2009, in New York. Associated Press

By **JAKE COYLE**
AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Are we

off to see the wizard, the Wonderful Wizard of Oz — again?

New Line Cinema is making a new adaptation of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," L. Frank Baum children's novel, with Nicole Kassell, the visual architect of "Watchmen," set to direct. Baum's 1900 novel, now in the public domain, has spawned many adaptations over the years — most famously, of course, the 1939 MGM musical by Victor Fleming and starring Judy Garland. Kassell's version will not be a musical. New Line said it will be a "fresh take" and a "reimagining" of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." It will have some advantages, too, since Warner Bros. owns New Line and the 1939 film. That means it can use some trademarked ele-

ments like the ruby slippers. "While the 1939 musical is part of my DNA, I am exhilarated and humbled by the responsibility of reimagining such a legendary tale," said Kassell in a statement. "The opportunity to examine the original themes — the quest for courage, love, wisdom and home — feels more timely and urgent than ever. These are profoundly iconic shoes to fill, and I am eager to dance alongside these heroes of my childhood as we pave a newly minted yellow brick road!" Kassell is an executive producer of HBO's "Watchmen" and directed three of its nine episodes, including the pilot. She has worked

primarily in television but directed the feature films "The Woodsman" and "A Little Bit of Heaven."

The most recent "Wizard of Oz" film came from the Walt Disney Co.'s "Oz the Great and Powerful" in 2013. Directed by Sam Raimi and starring James Franco, it was set 20 years before the events of the 1939 classic. □

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6	4	1	8	9	5	7	3	2
2	8	7	3	4	1	6	5	9
3	9	5	2	6	7	4	8	1

Difficulty Level ★★★

2/11

NFL carousel will spin soon, and not just for quarterbacks

By **BARRY WILNER**
AP Pro Football Writer

The Matthew Stafford-Jared Goff trade not only has whet fans' appetites for big deals, it's caused a social media frenzy about which quarterbacks are headed elsewhere.

That could happen with the likes of Carson Wentz, Jimmy Garoppolo, Deshaun Watson and Cam Newton. And on a slightly less publicized level with Teddy Bridgewater, Jameis Winston, Sam Darnold and Mitchell Trubisky.

But before anyone gets the idea that half of the NFL's starting signal-callers from 2020 will be employed by new teams in 2021, well, know that carousel is not spinning out of control. Why not? Money.

More specifically, contract dollars. Dead money. Salary-cap repercussions.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only reduced revenues for the NFL across the board, it also has forced a lower salary cap for 2021. That figure is undetermined, though it won't be less than \$175 million and probably will be in the \$180 million-\$185 million range. So any cap hits for trades involving QBs with mega-contracts will be built as much on finances as football skills. Sure, plenty of teams with questionable quarterbacking would love to add a Watson or Wentz — and even inquire about the availability of the likes of David Carr or Matt Ryan. But the price tag is a paramount consideration.

There are also the tricky contract dynamics for Dak Prescott and Ben Roethlisberger. Prescott played under the franchise tag cost of \$31.4 million but was injured in the Cowboys' fifth game. Dallas is adamant about keeping Prescott, preferably with a long-term deal.

"One of the things that we're going to have to really see where we are, and it will affect everybody, all 32 (NFL teams), and it will affect our team," Cowboys executive vice president Stephen Jones said, "is what the consequences of the virus have had on



Philadelphia Eagles' Carson Wentz warms up before an NFL football game against the Green Bay Packers in Green Bay, Wis., in this Sunday, Dec. 6, 2020, file photo.

Associated Press

our cap situation going forward, and where is that salary cap going to be and what kind of cap are

we going to manage into. So all those things will play a role into players that we keep that are under con-

tract, where we can sign — obviously Dak being at the top of that list — and then going from there."

Roethlisberger has indicated a willingness to redo his contract with Pittsburgh for what likely will be his final season. He's set for a cap hit of \$41 million, and that won't happen.

There probably are fewer teams with long-term set signal-callers than those in flux. For sure, the Patriots, Jets, Texans, Colts and Steelers in the AFC have uncertainty. Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, New Orleans, Carolina and San Francisco in the NFC could be making significant changes.

Plus, Urban Meyer is sold on Trevor Lawrence as the first overall draft pick for the Jacksonville Jaguars. There are a handful of quarterbacks in this draft who also could wind up as starters next season. □

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Djokovic holds off Tiafoe; Venus hobbles out in Australia

By JOHN PYE

AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)

— Frances Tiafoe had never played a No. 1, had never beaten anyone in the Top 5, and now he'd just won a tiebreaker against Novak Djokovic to level their second-round match at the Australian Open.

He nodded and motioned for more noise before plonking down in his court-side chair and saying what everyone watching already knew: "I love this. ... I love it!"

That lasted right up until the pivotal moment in the fourth set, serving at 3-all, 30-all, when he walked to the side of the court to get a towel, dry his face, and didn't resume play before the countdown clock ran out. He was given a time violation by the chair umpire, and docked a serve.

He lost that game, and didn't win another.

The 23-year-old American, quarterfinalist here two years ago, threw everything he could at Djokovic. But it wasn't quite enough to beat the eight-time Australian Open champion, who won the 3 1/2-hour afternoon match 6-3, 6-7 (3), 7-6 (2), 6-3.

"I felt like that kind of broke the match, honestly," Tiafoe said. "And he ran off with it. Hats off to him, but that was a terrible ending to the match, to such a high-quality match."

Tiafoe shook his head after finishing the match with a double-fault, then jogged



United States' Venus Williams receives treatment to leg injuries during her second round match against Italy's Sara Errani at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021.

Associated Press

to the net to embrace Djokovic. He'll take plenty from this. He said he knows he can compete at this level.

"He pushed me to the very limit," Djokovic said. "He's a very quick player. It's unpredictable what comes next ... I'm really glad to overcome such a battle." Djokovic served 26 aces, Tiafoe 23. Djokovic had the edge in terms of winners (56-49).

After assessing the stats, Djokovic said he couldn't remember serving more aces, or seeing more serves pass him, in a match in a

long time. "Credit to him," the 17-time major winner said, "for forcing me to feel uncomfortable."

Djokovic also agreed in his on-court, post-match interview that Tiafoe got a tough call. It was hot and sunny — the temperature peaked at 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit) — and Tiafoe had just lost a long rally.

"Those kinds of things are just unlucky," Djokovic said. "He deserved to have the first serve."

Tiafoe later said he was glad Djokovic acknowledged it, but he still thinks

there needs to be "conversations" about allowing more time between points while COVID-19 pandemic restrictions mean ballkids can't hold the towels for players.

"Could I have handled it better? Yes," Tiafoe said, answering his own question. "Yeah, I mean, that just broke me. I'm out there battling world No. 1, and like he needs any more help, you know."

Djokovic will play another American in the third round after No. 27-seeded Taylor Fritz who held off Reilly Opelka 4-6, 7-6 (6), 6-7 (4),

7-6 (5), 6-2.

Dominic Thiem, who lost the final last year to Djokovic but went one better to win the U.S. Open, took a short route to the third round with a 6-4, 6-0, 6-2 win over Dominic Koepfer and will next play unpredictable Australian Nick Kyrgios.

Another U.S. Open champion, Naomi Osaka, needed only an hour to sweep Caroline Garcia 6-2, 6-3.

Serena Williams kept her bid for a 24th Grand Slam singles title on track, making only 11 unforced errors as she defeated Nina Stojanovic 6-3, 6-0.

But a 21st trip to Melbourne Park ended painfully for her older sister, Venus Williams. The 40-year-old Williams, a seven-time major winner making her 88th Grand Slam main draw appearance, was down 5-1 in the opening set against Sara Errani when she landed awkwardly on her ankle as she approached the net for a volley.

She fought back tears before receiving treatment on the ankle, and gamely continued, hobbling between points, before losing 6-1, 6-0.

Two top 10 players went out of the women's draw: 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu, coming back from 15 months out with injury, was beaten by Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan and ninth-seeded Petra Kvitová, a two-time Wimbledon champion and the 2019 Australian Open runner-up, lost to Sorana Cirstea. □



In this file photo dated Sunday, July 21, 2019, The Claret Jug trophy for The Open golf tournament, seen during a press conference for the British Open Golf Championships at Royal Portrush in Northern Ireland. Associated Press

R&A has 'cautious optimism' that British Open will go ahead

ST. ANDREWS, Scotland (AP) — British Open organizers said Wednesday they have "cautious optimism" that golf's oldest major will go ahead at Royal St. George's in July.

The event was canceled last year — for the first time since 1945 — because of the coronavirus pandemic, with the R&A effectively pushing its schedule back one year.

That meant the 149th Open would still be held on the links in Sandwich in southeast England this year and

R&A chief executive Martin Slumbers said a "rigorous scenario-planning exercise" is underway to ensure it takes place.

"We continue to plan for a full-scale Championship," Slumbers said in an update, "but also have robust plans in place for a reduced capacity or behind-closed-doors model."

There is currently a lockdown in place in England amid the rollout of a vaccination program.

"There are undoubtedly many more

pressing concerns facing people at the moment but we are trying to look forward with cautious optimism," Slumbers said.

"We believe that seeing the world's best men's golfers in action at golf's original Championship will bring some much-needed joy and excitement back into our lives this summer."

The British Open is scheduled to take place from July 15-18. □